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## F. NEYRATS “ATOPIAS”

PHILOFICTION ATOPIAS, EK-SISTENCE, IMMUNOGLOBIN, NON-PHILOSOPHY, OUTSIDE,  
TRANS-JECT

Frédéric Neyrat’s book *Atopias* begins with the cracking sentence: “Philosophy borders on madness.” This madness has something in common with the universe, namely the imbalance, whereby in history there have been repeated attempts to integrate the excess that constitutes the imbalance into the system for which a program of equilibrium, a pure logic and ordered propositions stand. But nothing lasts long, the disorder returns and a new form of thinking announces itself and scares away the thought of the flat equilibrium of death, of the straight lines

of a Lucretius, the rain of atoms in which the clinamen finds no place.

In our world we talk about flows and flexible subjectivities, about becoming, with which everything can change and something new can always happen. This superficial diagnosis is shared by both reactionary and progressive forces. But what if, on the contrary, the flows of information were regimented, channeled and immobile, like an absolute stream, with nothing true to be found in the end and no serious change to be felt?

For Neyrat there are two kinds of streams: On the one hand, there is the stream of the clear line or closed circle, and on the other, the turbulent and spiraling stream that is never closed. Our world tends to create the flow at a constant speed as a treadmill where one advances without taking a single step. It is said that we live in an era of variability, relativity and finiteness. But more locked in than ever, we now live in a state of inertia and facade; never has humanity believed more in immortality, be it cryonics or uploading the brain to the computer. We consider ourselves immortal and precisely because of this we are able to deliberately destroy the world on the basis of humanism that has remained intact.

The present world of the absolute stream corresponds to a certain ontological regime, namely a saturated immanence, in which everything remains inside, without the hope of ever reaching an outside. This form of seclusion leads to the fact that contemporary thinking understands any radical interruption of the current system as an impossibility or even as a crime. Neyrat: "Cutting oneself off? Insanity? The first step to terrorism." Even if we talk about globalization, interconnectedness, flows, and hybridization, everything must be in its place, have an identity, and at least temporarily have a place or a portable substance, a territory that affirms the idea of saturated immanence to the detriment of any existential disjunction.

But aren't we living in a time of great disjunctions, between the inside and the outside, the self and the other, the human and the non-human? Are we not living at the end of identity? Neyrat refers here to Latour's figure of the hybrid, but immediately qualifies, because even if we translate the dual terms, we still produce intact entities, hybridization and identity being by no means incompatible. The more differences are erased, the more identity returns. It is one thing to say that there is no substantial other or wildness that is not socially constructed, or to say that there is in principle no outside, no other, and that nature and substance must be eliminated as nature. Deleuze has fought against the disastrous split of dual terms in the name of difference, and the response of Žižek and other authors currently dominating the theoretical field has been that any deep difference is a crack. One insists that nature is nothing but a chimera, the product of an ideology or a romantic transcendental principle. This leads to an ontological constructivism in which the exteriority of nature no longer has a place. Everything is inside.

One does not escape this exophobic situation, however, by simply stating, as speculative realism does, that there is such a thing as an object or an "ancestral" (Meillassoux) that is external to the human brain and the relations it maintains to the world. The assumption that matter existed before man and that it is mathematizable leaves intact the separation between inside and outside. Man remains inside and dreams of an outside that is merely contemplatively looked at

and subjected to mathematics through reason. One wants to escape relativism, but, asks Neyrat, is it not the relations that lead us to the outside?

For Neyrat, this is the central problem: what does it mean to live as an out-sider, trapped in time and history (as an existential plane)? The outside does not imply the exclusion of the sensitive, on the contrary it is the experience as such, burning and intense in life. When everything is inside, when any distance is absent and when any anthropological hierarchy is absent, then everything can be called an object. Object-oriented ontology (OOO) hallucinates everything and anything as the same, the grain of sand, the garbage, and the animal. And Neyrat wonders how the necessary assumption of immanence, insofar as the spirituality that negates life must actually be rejected, could transform into this dogged machine that destroys differences to eventually prepare the ground for a flat ontology. Now one could think that this way of thinking immanence has pushed the Deleuzian thought of univocity to the limit: What can be said of God can also be said of any other living being. However, Deleuze was quite clear on this point: it is not a matter of saying that there is only one way of saying being, but being is said in the same way by all individuating differences, i.e. the preposition of is crucial here insofar as it expresses the primacy of difference over being.

For Deleuze, within the existent and its power, there is a hierarchy that consists in expressing the potentiality of what is, that is, a specific individuation. Once something is separated from what it can do, there is no ontological equality. Moreover, and more seriously, speculation about the sameness of objects abstracts from the economic, political, and ecological conditions of the process of singularity, and it is this that drives OOO's passion for making lists that lack hierarchy—a toaster, a human, a fart—but what we miss is Deleuze's crowned anarchy and nomadic distribution within the framework of differential repetition. The reference to the conditions of singularity allows us to see the extent to which the living is now cut off from the capacities of what it can do.

Although the rejection of dualism has been fruitful, the associated abandonment of non-repressive difference means the production of a bland soup in which every successful singularity has had its head cut off in the name of an ontology of general equivalence that corresponds to capital. For Neyrat, the task of philosophy today is to think difference starting from the living, rather than identity starting from objects.

Neyrat is concerned with critiquing the theoretical and practical conditions of a saturated immanence, a world immune to the outside, truly a paradoxical world that transforms the immaculate, the untouchable, the monad, or the substantial object into an infectious substance found in everyone and everything. In contrast, Neyrat points to a specific transcendence that Deleuze exemplifies, without falling into the trap of the immanence-object, as transcendence  $\sim x$ . This is not at all a monotheistic transcendence outside the world (God, the Absolute, or the infinite substance), but a form of being-in-the-world as being-in-the-outside. For Neyrat, philosophy is conditioned by this outside. Atopia is first and foremost a non-place.

Philosophy rejects both the untouchable and the contagion. It is not entirely outside the world,

but neither is it inside it. In the first case, it sees itself as a kind of wisdom; in the second, it degenerates into a project of marketing. Neyrat, on the other hand, argues in his manifesto for a philosophy of the atopic according to transcendence ~ x, for an outside understood as a relation between thought and the world (and not as an object or a substance), an outside that escapes from the world. Thought does not define outside-being, but renews it; i.e. thought experiences the outside by which it is formed and this formation is nothing other than existence, that is, existing is outside-being. Existence designates a distance, a deviation, a diversion that emerges as an individuation (as *prima materia* without subject or object) without a pre-determined basis. Life now appears in all its precariousness. Every existence – without equivalence. Every existence is compelled to be eccentric. There is neither the replication of the norm nor an untouchable exception. In their eccentric-being the existences inhabit an eccentric field.

Neyrat asks what it means to be a subject of the outside: One always individuates when one begins from the outside, an empty fall, a non-encounter, a crack, or simply madness. This crack of individuation is the *ek-*, which relates the existing subject to the world. Only thanks to the deviation we are in the world. From there, the subject must be thought as a *trans-ject*. Thereby the subject is not to be put in opposition to animality, rather the subject is situated at the edge of an existential *trans-ject*. However, the *trans-ject* is not a flexible trajectory that can modify at will, but a singular persistence. The gathering of *trans-jects* is what Neyrat calls an adventurous coalition. The relation to the others is initially interior for this *trans-ject*; it is an interior disjunction through which existence approaches the world – a fragile and precarious relation. For philosophy, which for Neyrat still has to develop raw propositions before the concept, this means that it is a transgression of the excluded middle: Neither A nor non-A and at the same time A and non-A. Every transgression of this principle implies a leap into the unknown. *Hic rhodos, hic salta*, Marx would say at this point. (Neyrat is neither concerned with Sartre's universal intellectual nor with the specific intellectual of a Foucault: neither the one nor the other and both at the same time, the one and the other, i.e. the intellectual has to wade through the madness of his out-of-place-ness as a peripheral medium. When philosophy reaches for the truth, it screams and dampens the meaning, which always remains incalculable).

We live today in a state of prolonged wakefulness and work without time limit, over-information, the gluttony of electronic links and the overabundance of mechanized offers. are caught in an attention hysteria – and these virtual aspects meet flattened aspects – we are so so poor, so slow, quasi immobile. What does it mean when we are non-stop in transit (why?), in motion (at what speed?), waiting (why?) or sleeping (with what sedative?). We are connected in the 24/7 mode, caught in the networks of communication and representation that are becoming denser and denser within the framework of a threefold globality, i.e., technological, commodity, capital, and ecological circulation, to a point where the technological, financial, and ecological levels are becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish. In Chernobyl and Fukushima, the biosphere and the technological were produced simultaneously; information on one part of the world produces instantaneously, that is, without mediation, affects on another part of the world.

Immunoglobulin, Neyrat calls a network characterized by density, fusion, epidemic

communication and linkages, and possessing a saturated immanence. If in some periods of capitalism freedom of expression is channeled through a web of filters, networks and censors, in the ImmunoGlobulin phase this kind of neutralization increases to systemic terror against dissenters. There is no more outside, no exteriority, like the earth, capitalism is called suffocating and stuffy, swallowing with an endless reflex everything that still resists. Everything is subsumed under the economy, while the tele-technological globe and the ecosphere merge, the latter suffering shipwreck. Moreover, this asymmetric fusion has replaced humanity, or the human form, with a gigantic mechanical mouth. With the end of the distinction between nature and culture, nature collapses in the mills of the non-recyclable artifacts of a tele-technological culture. No wonder that for mankind purely nothing can remain an alien and nature must disappear, even if the culture disappears in a collateral damage along with it.

This is a clandestine complicity: man has redefined himself in an extreme exteriority to nature, and this is the concrete condition of possibility that the devouring of nature holds. Instead of endlessly debating hybrids, we need to understand that human transcendence has long since merged with immanence. To speak of saturated immanence is to speak not only of extreme speed, dizzying acceleration, and the political as well as psychological panic phenomena, but also of the tendency to immobilize phenomena on the horizon of their movement.

For Neyrat, the saturated describes a phase of transition in which the different variations of the currents that flow through the global network end up in a kind of inertial movement that always remains the same without any external agitation. This seems strange because we are always told that subjects today are variable, heterogeneous, fluid, and singular entities, but it is always just an inertial change that must necessarily be broken with. While Foucault's disciplinary societies corrected the mistakes of the past, Deleuze's societies of control gave the past a new form by regulating the present in real time and permanently controlling behavior, transparency societies take aim at the future in a particular way: by constantly preaching the future, they avoid it, through a preventive police that seeks to prevent the criminal event before it even happens, by anticipating the risk.

The prison now becomes definitively temporal: preventive immunization is the goal of transparency societies, by preventing anything truly new from happening and thus strangling any alterity. Saturated immanence is the result of an immunological drive that has found a new subjective form of expression thanks to technological development: It immunizes the self like a Spinozistic conatus, the attempt to remain within oneself, and it still inscribes itself in the death drive with the aim of eliminating deviation, so that everything remains intact and protected against any damage that can only be assumed. Thus, one is conditioned to fight against the fragility of life, to pretend that death, grief and loss do not exist. The immunological drive uses negativity to counteract the essential function of negativity.

The hydroglobe of absolute flux is the end result of this drive. These processes are contagious and immanent at the same time: Neyrat mentions here as an example the financial crisis, which seems to know no borders and can spread everywhere, but at the same time the financial sector remains untouchable against any kind of attack and rebuttal. Molecular biology can supposedly

predict the behavior of an organism based on knowledge of its genetic program that dmit transforms into eternal mutable forms of life, but there are CMOs that mutate and proliferate contrary to any prediction.

Neyrat posits two theses in this context. The higher the concentration in the undamaged zones, the higher the risk of contagion. And the denser the contagion, the more the zones of immunity seem impregnable. Finally, a global absolute has emerged that integrates all differences.

At this moment it becomes more important for philosophy to think about the alterity of non-being than about truth. It should give an explanation for the madness of the "out-of-place" by charging the existential trans-ject with new meanings. For Neyrat, on the other hand, Spinoza is the mastermind of saturated immanence. And Neyrat believes that Deleuze was not, in the end, a Spinozist insofar as he took the outside into account, which again aligns with Andrew Culp's "Dark Deleuze." By repeating Spinoza's famous phrase "The body does not know what it is capable of," Deleuze/Guattari make a genuinely anti-substantialist argument and stage the unconditional cry for the outside, experience, and a contingent construction. It doesn't matter if today instead of the concept of God or nature one uncritically uses the concept of tele-technological capital and then again means the infinite total substance, which denies the finiteness, which is always multiple and therefore worldly. Our world urgently needs again, according to Neyrat, interruptions, caesuras and movements of exteriority and therefore one should plead for a model of finite transcendence, the transcendence  $\sim x$ , where the  $x$  does not imply an overhang, rather the plural world of the existent is flushed through the sign  $\sim x$  towards the exterior. In this respect, the atopia is also not a utopia or another place, rather the other of the place. E is the clinamen that exists internally in its relation to the world.

The world is not compact, it is not a world of saturated immanence, but it is outside-of-itself. And existence in its actuality consists of the denunciation of being. Instead of the term "existence" Neyrat now puts the term "insistence". This is about singular existence, which understands contingency not as a mere opening towards an infinite number of possibilities, but as a background against which the situation of the exception is formed, insofar as it is an eccentricity. This is, however, far from a relativism that flattens all ideas and values in the name of facts, precisely by asserting that everything and anything is contingent and equivalent – instead, it is necessary to insist on the singularity of existence, and that in the outside. For every living being, being is formed by the outside in a kind of tension of existence. Or, to use an alienated Lacan, the outside or the extimate is the expression that the intimate is the other, such as a foreign body or a parasite. The most intimate intimate is the extimacy of the Other.

To pass from one place to another is the ordeal of the outside. It is not necessarily a movement, for the ordeal can happen within a place, but in no way does one become immobile. Neither inclined to mobility nor to immobility, existence is a tension. And if there is no center, this does not mean that every thing is the same, rather this reveals the impossibility of further concealing the eccentricity of every existence. This concept of eccentricity negates two conceptions of exception: narcissism, which makes the exception for itself, and sovereignty, the exception to the law, through which the law itself comes into being. Eccentricity involves the obligation to

singularize oneself in an a-centric world. The necessity of singularity produces the contingency of the world. If everything were necessary, there would be no differences.

And in this, infinity is to be understood as the finite insofar as it exists. The meaning of the concept of finitude inheres sui generis the non-ground or, as Neyrat puts it, the antecedence of the exit before the entrance (into the university, the career, etc.) The outside-being cannot be postponed. The Hegelian thesis that in order to know who one was and is, one must leave oneself and become alienated from oneself is to be contradicted insofar as becoming comes before being; more than that, the eccentricity of every being ultimately defines no becoming at all, but an immediate tension, the ex-tension, the tension of the outside, which demands difference. And the ex- is time.

De existence, in Nancy's sense, is from the beginning a being-with. There is always a surplus, a projection. The outside of being is a set of relations that constitutes the existent in an existential field. There is a paradox here according to Neyrat: Only the experience of singularity opens us to the singularity of others. And existences form a field of eccentricities: Each existence demonstrates that to begin at all, one must first of all deviate, not as movement in a given space, but as the simultaneous creation of existence and its space. Precisely because existence is eccentricity, it has no original space, but shares an existential field with all the other existences. The reality of this field depends again on the deviation of the individuals, on every kind of inhabiting outside the center, or to say it differently, on the lived outside.

translated by deepL.

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